Newsletter for Birdwatchers

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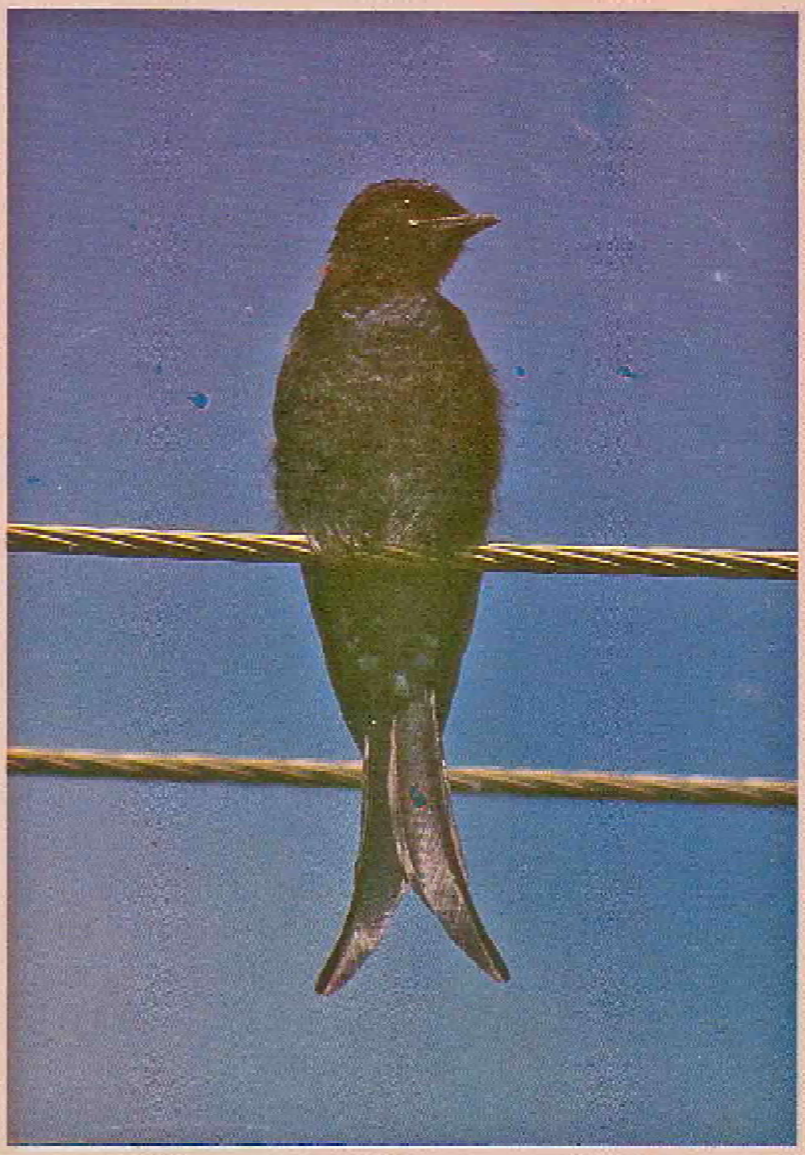

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Editorial

Parks for Peace

In the July 1996 issue of our Newsletter I wrote about the Parks for Peace proposed by IUCN. I quoted the views of Foreign Secretary Salman Haidar about the possibility of an International Nature Reserve in the Rann of Kutch straddling the disputed area between India and Pakistan. Many years ago in June 1966, I had suggested this possibility at the IUCN General Assembly in Lucerne in Switzerland. Peter Scott and several others welcomed the idea, but when I returned home surprisingly I received little encouragement from Salim Ali or any of the others.

Subsequently (whether triggered by the suggestions in our Newsletter, I do not know), but a group of mountaineers, Army Officers and others, promoted the idea that the Siachen glacier (the cause of much suffering between India and Pakistan), should be converted into a Peace Park.

One of the persons who is playing a leading part in this project is Aamir Ali, who is well known to our readers. Let us hope that Siachen will soon cease to be an area of conflict and herald one of peace. I reproduce the report which appeared on the front page of the Hindu of 22.6.2001.:

"Concerned over environmental degradation and the loss of life in Siachen, a group of conservationists has proposed that the troops stationed there be withdrawn and the glacier be converted into a Peace Park. The proposal will be formally sent to the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, ahead of his summit meeting with the Pakistan President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, in Agra.

Mr. Aamir Ali, who is here as part of a group to commemorate the golden jubilee of the Trishul mountaineering expedition, said the conversion of Siachen into a natural reserve offered several advantages. First, it skirted the contentious issue of border demarcation. The reserve, along the Saltoro range, could be jointly maintained by India and Pakistan without reference to territorial boundaries.

Secondly, it would not involve dislocation of populations as the area was uninhabited. Also, it would be an honourable way out for the countries locked in a battle since 1984 on the heights ranging up to 21,000 feet. "If Siachen becomes a trans-frontier peace park, it maybe a way out as no side (India or Pakistan) loses out." Mr. Ali said.

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marsh harrier was sitting near by, watching and waiting for this migratory bird to die. We intimated the available park authorities. Sadly nothing could be done. The next day there was no sign of them except some scattered feathers.

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BLUE JAYS RESCUED IN GWALIOR [M.P.] *DR. RAJIV SAXENA & GAURAV PARIHAR*

It is a known fact that Indian roller or blue jay [*Coraclas benghalensis*] is worshipped and released in the morning of the festival of Dussera at several places in Madhya Pradesh. But not many are aware that a large number of them die during trapping, forcefeeding of alien food and soon after release. Our NGO- "Society for Environmental Awareness & Research on Culture and Heritage" [SEARCH] closely observed them in Gwallor [M.P.] this year and managed to free 39 of them from the trappers with the collaboration of the Forest Department.

It was noted that the professional trappers catch them three days before the festival. They use a cage, net and adhesive material to trap them. A few die in the process. The remaining are kept hungry for the next three days to show on the day of Dussera that the Nilkanth has blessed the devotees by accepting grain and other cooked food from their hands. Their alien food causes fungal infection in their throats as well as digestive and respiratory problems. After feeding they are bought and released by the people. A long period of hunger and thereafter forced feeding make them incapable of flying swiftly. They somehow fly and sit on a nearby tree branch only to fall down after some time and die.

SEARCH approached Mr. Tapesh Jha, D.F.O. who sent forest personnel with the members of the Society. The team rescued 39 blue jays and freed them. The local media published the proceedings prominently.

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SWIFTS ON VENGURLA ROCKS. *VISHWAS D. KATDARE, Near Laxminarayan Temple, At & Po.Tal.Chiplun, Dist. Ratnagiri, Maharashtra 415 605*

You may have received details regarding the Vengurla Rocks, Indian Swiftlet case from Dr. Satish Pande.

We have started a Status Survey of the Indian Swiftlet *Collocalia unicolor* in sourth Konkan with support from SANCF.

Once again we visited the Vengurla Rock on 6th June and the trip was very adventurous and exciting.

The Swifts have rebuilt the nests with grass and there are 1 or 2 eggs or newly hatched chicks in each nest. As per our estimate five thousand nests are in the cave.

The rock was crowded with terns and their nests. The great crested tern *Sterna bergii* 300, lesser crested tern *Sterna Bengalensis* 5, bridled tern *Sterna anaethetus* 800, roseate tern *Sterna dougallii* 150, were seen on the rock.

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BREEDING COLONIES OF CORMORANTS (Phalacrocorax carbo). *SUMIT DOOKIA, Department of Zoology, J.N.V. University, Jodhpur 342005 RAJASTHAN*

Inside the south western side of Machia Safari Desert Park, Jodhpur (Rajasthan.) (26° 18' N; 73° 01' E), twin lake of Takhat Sagar Kayalana are situated, which are the main source of potable water for city dwellers. The Kayalana lake with a filling capacity of 190 mcft and run off area of 84 km², is also a center of breeding and brooding by cormorants. The rocky shores of the Kayalana lake is inhabited by the bushes of *Prosopis juliflora*, whose outstretched arid dried and green branches are frequently used by them for nesting.

Visiting the site on 16th Nov. 2001, I located an active breeding colony of 29 nests in the densely mingled bushes of *Prosopis juliflora*. This observation was recorded at 8.30 a.m.

These bushes were about 50 mtr. inside the water and the nests were clustered at the top of the trees 2-3 mtr above the water level. 10 x 50m binocular observation revealed that these colonies were purely of a single species with 1 to 3 no. of immature chicks. The parent cormorants were quite busy in feeding their nestlings by capturing fish from the nearly fresh water lake.

These nests were obviously built on bushes, partly inundated with water. All the nests were 1 to 2 mtr from the surface of the water. Is this their preferred location?

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SIGHTING OF GREY PELICANS (Pelecanus philippensis) NEAR COIMBATORE, *S. ASHOK KUMAR, IAS(Retd), No. 491, Road No 10, Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad 500033*

While birding at KURUCHI TANK on the outskirts of Coimbatore city on 23.12.2000, I had sighted five grey pelicans foraging on the eastern side of the tank. This tank is an irrigation tank with a tank bed of 350 acres. There were a number of common teals, spotbills, large egrets, paddy birds and a female pheasanttailed jacana. As the crow flies, this tank is about four kilometers from Sundaka Muthur Lake where I had sighted 22 grey pelicans on 17.12.99. (NLBW, Vol.40, No 2, March/April, 2000). It is likely that the grey pelicans would have come from Sundaka Muthur lake to Kuruchi tank for foraging. Enquiries revealed that the pelicans are not roosting near Kuruchi tank.

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SIGHTING OF SOCIABLE LAPWING IN SHYAMPUR. *DIPANKAR GHOSE, Department of Zoology, University of Calcutta, 35 Ballygunge Circular Road, Kolkata 700019, and SRIKUMAR CHATTOPADHYAY, Zoological Survey of India, New Alipur M Block, Kolkata 700053.*

On a winter morning, on 17 January 1999, we were on a routine bird-watching trip to the southwestern part of Shyampur - Budge Budge area, about 25 kms. south of Calcutta. Budge Budge is